

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3371

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USINT BAGHDAD

UNCLAS KUWAIT 3067

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EGEN, BGEN KU

SUBJ: BECHTEL MOVING REGIONAL OFFICE TO KUWAIT

1. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY KEITH THOMPSON, CURRENTLY OF BECHTEL/WASHINGTON, THAT COMPANY HAS DECIDED TO SHIFT MIDDLE EAST OFFICE FROM BEIRUT TO KUWAIT. THOMPSON INTENDS TO ARRIVE HERE TO HEAD NEW OFFICE IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. APPARENTLY BECHTEL WAS NOT FULLY SATISFIED WITH GENERAL SITUATION IN BEIRUT, AND RECENT TROUBLES THERE LED TO DECISION TO MOVE. COMPANY CONSIDERED BAHRAIN AND CAIRO AS POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES BUT SETTLED ON KUWAIT SINCE IT ALREADY HAD ONE LARGE JOB HERE WITH HOPES OF OTHERS TO FOLLOW.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ENGINEERING THAT HAD BEEN DONE IN BEIRUT WILL NOW BE DONE IN LONDON, HOUSTON OR SAN FRANCISCO. KUWAIT OFFICE, IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING HOME FOR BECHTEL STAFF WORKING ON KUWAIT GAS UTILIZATION PROJECT, WILL ALSO SERVE AS REGIONAL
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ADMINISTRATIVE AND SERVICES CENTER FOR BECHTEL OPERATIONS IN

IRAN, IRAQ, SAUDI ARABIA AND ABU DHABI AS WELL AS ANY OTHER
WORK COMPANY UNDERTAKES IN REGION. THOMPSON TOLD EMBOFF
BECHTEL WILL BE BRINGING THIRTY FAMILIES TO KUWAIT.

3. COMMENT: SO BECHTEL IS ONLY RELATIVELY LARGE COMPANY TO MOVE
TO KUWAIT IN PREFERENCE TO BEIRUT AS RESULT SECURITY PROBLEMS
IN LEBANON. OTHER COMPANIES SUCH AS CARRIER, IBM AND KIDDER-
PEABODY HAVE HAD SMALL REGIONAL OFFICES HERE, AND LOCAL AGENTS
OF SOME US COMPANIES (E.G. CATERPILLAR) HAVE REGIONAL OPERATIONS,
BUT BECHTEL OFFICE WILL BE FIRST LARGE OFFICE OF US FIRM TO BE
LOCATED IN KUWAIT. AS FAR AS WE KNOW THERE ARE NO KUWAITI
LEGAL RESTRICTIONS TO SUCH AN OFFICE HERE AS LONG AS IT IS
SPONSORED BY A KUWAITI. THEREFORE, OTHER COMPANIES WITH SIGNI-
FICANT ACTIVITIES IN KUWAIT MAY ALSO CONSIDER ESTABLISHING
REGIONAL OFFICES HERE IN NEAR FUTURE. AT LEAST ONE SUCH COMPANY,
FOSTER-WHEELER, HAS BEEN CONSIDERING SUCH A MOVE. POSSIBILITY
EXISTS, THEREFORE, THAT KUWAIT'S IMPORTANCE AS REGIONAL CENTER
FOR US FIRMS MAY INCREASE OVER NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS, ALTHOUGH
WE DOUBT NUMBER OF FIRMS WILL BE ANYWHERE NEAR AS MANY AS EXIST
NOW IN TEHRAN AND BEIRUT.
STOLTZFUS

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